

**The KISSinger of Death: Henry Kissinger and the
Letelier-Moffitt Assassination**

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INTRODUCTION

On September 21st, 1976, Orlando Letelier was assassinated. Driving along in Washington, DC, a bomb planted in his car exploded, killing Letelier and Ronni Moffitt, one of his colleagues who was with him at the time. The story of Letelier's assassination shook the United States, not only because a murder took place in the nation's capital, but because of the implications of international involvement. As Peter Kornbluh, renowned author of *The Pinochet Files*, asserts, "the Letelier-Moffitt assassinations constituted the most brazen act of international terrorism ever committed in the capital of the United States" prior to 9/11.¹

Letelier was the foreign minister in Chile under Allende, and was a leading voice in the resistance against the Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet. Having been tortured and imprisoned in Chile, he had fled to the United States upon his release. When he was murdered, the international community immediately assumed the violent Chilean dictatorship was to blame. Indeed, the *New York Times* article released on the day of the assassination described the incident as a "political assassination," evidencing that the tyranny of the Chilean dictatorship had extended to the United States.²

Since then, it has been conclusively shown that the assassination was ordered by Augusto Pinochet himself.³ The assassination was part of Operation Condor, a secret intelligence and operations system created in order to eliminate threats to the military dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil. Included in Operation Condor was Phase III, which sought to assassinate "subversive enemies."⁴ Letelier was just one of the victims of this top-secret effort.

The extent of U.S. involvement in Condor Phase III is shrouded in secrecy, but many point to then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as a potential co-conspirator. Prominent historians such as John Dinges, Peter Kornbluh, Kenneth Maxwell, as well as Orlando Letelier's own son, Francisco Letelier, have raised Kissinger's name in connection to the Letelier-Moffitt assassination.⁵

I seek to illuminate Kissinger's involvement in the Letelier-Moffitt assassination by investigating declassified documents from the months leading up to his death. While the historical record does not show that Kissinger was directly involved in the Letelier assassination, I will demonstrate the ways in which

1 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 349.

2 Spinder, "Opponent of Chilean Junta Slain In Washington by Bomb in His Auto."

3 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*.

4 McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 3.

5 "My Father Lost His Life through a Bombing, by Agents of a Man Who Henry Kissinger Supported"; Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*; Dinges, *The Condor Years*; Rogers and Maxwell, "Mythmaking and Foreign Policy [with Reply]."

Kissinger could have and failed to prevent this tragedy.⁶ I suggest a series of explanations as to why Kissinger failed to act; however, a key piece of this story is the continued secrecy and ambiguity that engulfs it. Nonetheless, the truth must be pursued in order to better understand the ways in which the U.S. government operates and to allow for healing from both the assassination and the broader violence of the Chilean dictatorship.

KISSINGER'S INACTION

There are three key elements to the story of how Kissinger could have potentially prevented the Letelier-Moffitt assassination but failed to do so: his prior knowledge of Operation Condor, his disregard of evidence of an assassination plot in the United States, and crucially, his deliberate call for no *démarche* to be issued, which would have demanded that leaders of Operation Condor cease any assassination efforts.

While the United States had been aware of Operation Condor previously, on July 30th, 1976, the CIA and State department had a weekly meeting where they discussed the new knowledge that Operation Condor had expanded beyond simple intelligence efforts to assassination plots. The memorandum of the meeting summarizes their findings:

“Originally designed as a communications system and data bank to facilitate defense against the guerrilla Revolution Coordinating Junta, the organization was emerging as one with a far more activist role, including, specifically that of identifying, locating, and “hitting” guerrilla leaders.”⁷

The first thing of note from this document is the surprisingly supportive language surrounding the potential for political assassinations. They describe expanding Condor’s capabilities to murder as a “activist role,” and assassinations are described with the euphemism “hitting.” The soft language fails to condemn these actions. Furthermore, the document even views these potential assassinations positively, going on to say that the desire to conduct assassinations is “an understandable reaction” to left-wing organizing abroad. The sanitized language and the rationalization of these desires place the United States far from a role opposed to political assassinations, but rather as one of tentative support.

Nonetheless, the potential for assassinations was immediately relayed onto Henry Kissinger. On August 3rd, 1976, Harry Shlaudeman, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, who had been present at the previously described meeting with the CIA, wrote to Kissinger to inform him that

⁶ While there is extensive evidence that Kissinger supported Pinochet’s rise to power, thus implicating him in Pinochet’s subsequent crimes, that connection remains outside the scope of this paper. Rather, Kissinger’s actions will only be explored directly in connection to Operation Condor and the death of Orlando Letelier.

⁷ “ARA-CIA Weekly Meeting- 30 July 1976: Operation Condor,” July 30, 1976.

Operation Condor seeks to “find and kill terrorists.”⁸ However, the severity and immorality of these political assassinations are made clear to Kissinger, with Shlaudeman describing these actions as “murder operations” and “bloody counterterrorism” where “terrorists,” Shlaudeman highlights, are seen by the Southern Cone to include “anyone who opposes government policy,” even if it is “non-violent dissent.”⁹ However, while Shlaudeman believes these assassinations would be damaging, he also states that the US would be “casual beneficiaries” of such actions, “for reasons that are too obvious to need elaboration here.”¹⁰ While these two documents vary in tone and level of condemnation of the potential for Operation Condor to conduct assassinations, they crucially provide evidence that Henry Kissinger was aware of the potential for Operation Condor to conduct political assassinations nearly two months in advance of the Letelier assassination. He had two months to try and deter acts of international terrorism.

Not only was Kissinger aware of the potential for political assassinations, he also had reason to believe an assassination might take place in the United States, and that Letelier may have been Pinochet’s target. Kissinger had sat down with Pinochet just over three months before Letelier’s assassination. While they primarily discussed the Organization of American States (OAS) Conference in Chile, in a memorandum of their conversation, Pinochet is documented to identify Letelier as a subversive enemy by name:

“But we are constantly being attacked by the Christian Democrats. They have a strong voice in Washington. Not the people in the Pentagon, but they do get through to Congress. Gabriel Valdez has access. Also Letelier.”¹¹

While a passing comment, Letelier was one of only two names to be raised as troubling to Pinochet. In light of the subsequent information that members of Operation Condor sought to eliminate political opponents, Kissinger had direct knowledge that Letelier could be a desired target for assassination.

Kissinger also had access to clues that Operation Condor could be desiring to operate in the United States. Michael Townley and Armando Fernández Larios, known operatives of the Chilean secret police, DINA, were discovered attempting to enter the United States through Paraguay using false names and Paraguayan passports in late July, 1976.¹² Peter Kornbluh, the director of the National Security Archive’s Chile Documentation Project, carefully documents how the American consulate was told that the two men were traveling as part of a CIA-sanctioned mission. The consulate hesitantly approved their visas, but

8 “ARA Monthly Report (July): The ‘Third World War’ and South America,” August 3, 1976.

9 “ARA Monthly Report (July): The ‘Third World War’ and South America.”

10 “ARA Monthly Report (July): The ‘Third World War’ and South America.”

11 “U.S.-Chilean Relations,” June 8, 1976.

12 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 350.

immediately informed the CIA of the situation. When the consulate was informed that the CIA was not aware of the Chilean operatives, the visas were revoked. However, this incident fueled “intense suspicion about the true nature of their mission.”¹³ Indeed, Harry Shlaudeman (the man who advised Kissinger on issues in the Americas) was immediately informed, and told the American Ambassador to stop “this harebrained scheme,” and urge the Chileans not to attempt to enter the United States.¹⁴ Nonetheless, Townley managed to enter the states on September 9th simply using a different passport. He would go on to plant the car bomb that killed Letelier.

Two DINA agents traveling through Paraguay using fake Paraguayan passports and attempting to enter the United States should have raised alarms that Operation Condor could be attempting actions in the United States. Both Chile and Paraguay were known members of Operation Condor, and the coalition was known to be planning assassinations. It seems intelligence agencies could have prevented Townley from entering the country had it been a priority.

Knowing both that Operation Condor was pursuing political assassinations and that Chilean operatives had attempted to enter the United States, one would expect the state department to try to deter the Southern Cone from pursuing an assassination on U.S. soil. There is some suggestion that actions were attempted to deter Condor assassinations prior to the Letelier murder. On August 23rd, an urgent cable from Kissinger was sent to the American Embassies in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, La Paz, Brasília, and Asunción (bases for Operation Condor). The cable explained that “government planned and directed assassinations within and outside the territory of Condor members has most serious implications which we must face squarely and rapidly.”¹⁵ It advised that the embassies in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Santiago “seek appointment as soon as possible with highest appropriate official, preferably the Chief of State, to make representations drawing on the following points:” which include making clear that the rumors of plans for the assassination of subversives “would create a most serious moral and political problem” if they prove to be true.¹⁶

However, according to all released documents, none of the ambassadors delivered their messages. Hewson Ryan, one of Shlaudeman’s deputies, stated himself in an interview in 1988 that the message was never delivered.¹⁷ Joan Patrice McSherry, author of *Predatory States*, points out that, “ambassadors cannot ignore directives from the secretary of state, however, unless there is a

13 Kornbluh, 351.

14 Kornbluh, 351.

15 “Operation Condor Aug 23,” August 23, 1976.

16 “Operation Condor Aug 23.”

17 Nethercut, “Oral History Interview with Hewson Ryan,” April 27, 1998.

back channel counterorder or some other communication.”¹⁸ What happened to this call for action, that Ryan states “might have prevented” the Letelier assassination?¹⁹

On August 24, 1976, the day after Kissinger sent out his memo to the embassies of the Condor countries, Ambassador to Chile, David Popper, sent out his response. He expressed worry that talking directly to President Pinochet could be difficult:

“In my judgment, given Pinochet’s sensitivity regarding pressures by [U.S. Government], he might well take as an insult any inference that he was connected with such assassination plots... I note that the instruction is cast in urgent terms... Please advise.”²⁰

The Ambassador to Uruguay, Ernest Siracusa, also sent a letter in response addressing concern that issuing a *démarche* could put him in danger.²¹

Subsequently, Shlaudeman wrote to Kissinger on August 30th, laying out three options by which to communicate the *démarche* in light of the new concerns raised by the ambassadors. All three options sought to take action, with Shlaudeman writing that these actions are trying to prevent “a series of international murders that could do serious damage to the international status and reputation of the countries involved.”²² However, despite the urgency made apparent in Kissinger’s first memo calling for a *démarche*, there was no response from Kissinger until September 16th, over two weeks later.

A document that was only released in 2010 following a significant amount of public pressure reveals Kissinger’s response.²³ Rather than accept any of the three options, the “secretary declined to approve message to Montevideo and has instructed that no further action be taken on this matter.”²⁴ Shlaudeman obeyed these orders and sent a cable, “instruct[ing] the ambassadors to take no further action, noting that there have been no reports in some weeks indicating an intention to activate the Condor scheme.”²⁵ This cable was sent the day before the death of Orlando Letelier.

Despite the clear knowledge of Operation Condor beginning assassination plots which Kissinger believed were emergent to address less than a month previously, and evidence that operatives from Southern Cone countries were seeking access to the United States, the US failed to act. At the helm of this inaction was Henry Kissinger, who’s response to the call to prevent “international

18 McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 120.

19 Nethercut, “Oral History Interview with Hewson Ryan,” April 27, 1998.

20 “Santiago 8210,” August 24, 1976.

21 “Operation Condor [Attachments Not Included],” August 30, 1976.

22 “Operation Condor [Attachments Not Included].”

23 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 354.

24 “Actions Taken,” September 16, 1976.

25 “Operation Condor Sept 20,” September 20, 1976.

murders that could do serious damage to the international status and reputation of the countries involved” was to order that nothing happen.²⁶ While the available documents show no direct support from Kissinger of the Letelier assassination, the knowledge, deliberation, and subsequent inaction during the time leading up to September 21st show that Kissinger did little to prevent what could have been a preventable assassination.

KISSINGER’S MOTIVATIONS

While it is now clear the ways in which Henry Kissinger could have, and failed to prevent the Letelier assassination, the question remains as to why he failed to act. This story is one that contains much more ambiguity as existing documentation does not record the thought processes of the secretary of state. However, I will explore four possible, not mutually exclusive theories: American ego, care for the US’ relationship with Pinochet, perceived benefit from the assassinations, and human error.

One theory as to why Kissinger failed to take action to prevent the Letelier-Moffitt assassination is that the U.S. believed that they were different in the eyes of the Southern Cone than the European countries where Operation Condor would take place. Evidence suggests that the U.S officials’ ego led them to believe that the Southern Cone would not dare attempt an assassination on U.S. soil, despite evidence to the contrary. Indeed, released documents on Operation Condor only discuss these operations in relation to potential political assassinations in Europe, with no mention of the potential for these to take place on American soil. For example, the memo from Shlaudeman to Kissinger on August 3rd informing Kissinger of possible political assassinations describes these to take place “in [South America] and in Europe.”²⁷ It is true that much of Condor’s operations took place in South America and Europe;²⁸ however, it seems that the United States perhaps considered themselves special and beyond the potential influence of their hemispheric partners in South America.

Even when direct suggestion of Condor assassinations in the US were made, the United States still demonstrated an ideology that Operation Condor would not dare to plan an assassination within the territorial borders of the United States. In July 1976, a Latin American military official, while intoxicated, stated that maybe he ““would have to send someone to the U.S. to get Congressman Koch”” after detailing the military’s frustration with him.²⁹ Even though this incident took place being directly around the time that the U.S. knew that

26 “Operation Condor [Attachments Not Included],” August 30, 1976.

27 “ARA Monthly Report (July): The ‘Third World War’ and South America,” August 3, 1976.

28 McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*.

29 Eatinger, “CIA Letter to Koch,” September 26, 2001.a

Operation Condor was planning assassinations, the C.I.A. concluded that this was “nothing more than alcohol-induced bravado,” and it was not until after the Letelier assassination that they “questioned their assumption that other countries would not conduct assassinations in the U.S.”³⁰ Such bravado, even in the face of legitimate threat and concerning evidence, could explain Kissinger’s lack of action: he simply didn’t believe that Condor would ever attempt something in the United States, even if in hindsight this looks foolish. However, even if this is the case, this would still fail to explain why the United States would not take action in order to prevent assassination attempts outside of the US.

The desire to preserve a close relationship with Southern Cone countries, and particularly Pinochet himself, serves as another possible explanation. There is ample documentation around the time of the Letelier assassination that Kissinger and the State Department did not want to upset Pinochet, despite the grave threat to international stability that political assassinations could pose. For example, Popper, the Ambassador to Chile’s request for further consultation before issuing the détente was due to his belief that Pinochet “might well take as an insult any inference that he was connected with such assassination plots.”³¹ Causing even possible insult to Pinochet was prioritized over asserting the United States’ opposition to political assassination, failing to possibly prevent a murder as a result. This document suggests that the United States was deeply concerned with maintaining good relationships with Pinochet, despite evidence as to his involvement in mass human rights abuses and political assassinations. Of course, it was Pinochet that ordered the assassination of Letelier, making this call not to risk insulting him by issuing a *démarche* even more damning and revealing of US priorities.

The emphasis on preserving positive relationships with Pinochet is evident after the Letelier murder as well. A cable sent by Kissinger to Popper on October 4th states that “the issue,” being Operation Condor assassinations, “should not, repeat not be raised with Pinochet.”³² Even after an assassination of a political rival on US soil, Kissinger still did not want to unnecessarily bother Pinochet. The alliances and relationships between the two countries clearly had an important role to play in Kissinger’s lack of action.

Another reason that Kissinger could have withheld action that had the potential to prevent the Letelier assassination is that he may have perceived Phase III of Operation Condor as beneficial to US interests, and did not want to interfere, especially in conjunction with the belief that such actions would not take place on US soil. In the cable sent from Shlaudeman to Kissinger on August 3rd, Shlaudeman explains that if Operation Condor proceeds, the United States would

30 Eatinger.

31 “Santiago 8210,” August 24, 1976.

32 “Operation Condor [Attached to Forwarding Memorandum],” October 4, 1976.

be a “casual beneficiary... for reasons that are too obvious to need elaboration here.”³³ Kissinger had clearly voiced his opinion that the threat of communism in South America concerned the US, stating in his memoir that “the forces of radical upheaval in South America posed a greater threat” than a dissolution of Chile’s democratic institutions or human rights abuses.³⁴ While he makes these statements in connection to Chile immediately after Pinochet came to power, it is clear that fighting the communist threat was of grave concern to Kissinger. While Kissinger was also briefed on the possible catastrophic consequences if political assassinations by Operation Condor proceeded, the benefit of reduced opposition from the left in South America may have put a damper on timely action in preventing these assassinations.

Finally, Kissinger’s lack of action may simply have been an accident. Former Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers argues that Kissinger’s order for “no further action” implied that action had already been taken and the *démarche* had been distributed.³⁵ While there is no evidence to suggest that the *démarche* was distributed, perhaps Kissinger believed otherwise. Perhaps Schlaudeman’s explanation for not issuing the *démarche*, that there had been “no reports in some weeks” that assassinations would actually occur, genuinely meant that the U.S. believed that the Southern Cone had decided to abandon this plot altogether and no warning was necessary. Perhaps the United States truly did not think to keep track of Michael Townley after his attempted entry to the United States. It is possible that accidents were made with no explanation other than human error; however, some of these claims are hard to believe given the level of intelligence available to Henry Kissinger.

Why Henry Kissinger did not act to prevent the preventable assassination of Letelier may never be known concretely. Some combination of American ego, diplomatic relations, promotion of US interests, and human error may have been at play. However, this history consists of conflicting narratives and missing data that create profound ambiguity. I will now explore the ambiguity and controversy that still surrounds this story.

REMAINING UNCERTAINTY

While the story this paper has pieced together is primarily based on the available primary sources released in the National Security Archive, there exists considerable debate around both the interpretation of these released documents and the absence of historical documents that may never be released.

33 “ARA Monthly Report (July): The ‘Third World War’ and South America,” August 3, 1976.

34 Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 754.

35 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 533.

First, with regards to the documents that have been released, McSherry has suggested that there is reason to doubt the fidelity even of the documents that have been made public. She does not suggest that the documents were falsely constructed after the fact, but rather that perhaps these documents were constructed with the knowledge that they would leave a paper trail and thus were carefully worded and even intentionally created. Indeed, she highlights how Kissinger was known to instruct U.S. ambassadors “never to trust sensitive messages to cables.”³⁶ Given that the *démarche* was never issued despite Kissinger’s original call for action on August 23rd, McSherry questions whether that document may have been created simply “for the record,” rather than in earnest.³⁷ While it is impossible to know either way, her accusations illuminate the need to question even the documents that are currently accessible.

Furthermore, the documents that have been released have also been interpreted in different ways. One prominent example is that of the debate between Kissinger’s colleague William Rogers, and prominent historian Kenneth Maxwell in *Foreign Policy*. Over a series of essays published back and forth, Rogers and Maxwell debated the evidence pointing to Kissinger’s involvement with Pinochet, including the Letelier assassination. While there were many elements to the debate, one point of contention was whether Shlaudeman’s call for “no further action” to be taken meant that the *détente* had already been issued, as Rogers argued, or that it should never be issued, as Maxwell argued.³⁸ While there is no evidence to suggest that the *démarche* was ever issued, debate was still possible given that only scraps of evidence were available, making the interpretation of even one sentence crucially important.

In addition, many of the documents released contain heavily redacted portions that further cloud the story. For example, there was a CIA report on Letelier from September 16, 1976, four days before his assassination. However, the document has been so heavily redacted that there is no indication as to why the CIA was monitoring his activities at that time.³⁹

These examples demonstrate that while the released primary sources provide glimpses of history, they possess important limitations that can contribute to the uncertainty of the past.

However, perhaps of greater concern to the Letelier assassination is the amount of information that has not been released, opening the possibility that the true story is still yet to be discovered. Indeed, the story that the primary documents now tell of the Letelier assassination is drastically different than the history that was available in decades past. For example, for twenty years after the

36 McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*, 122.

37 McSherry, 122.

38 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 533.

39 “Orlando Letelier,” September 16, 1976.

Letelier assassination, the documents the U.S. had released suggested that the U.S. did not know about Operation Condor until after the Letelier-Moffitt assassination, with Condor first being documented on September 28, 1976.⁴⁰ Without the documents that were later declassified, the history of the United States and Kissinger's inaction in face of the knowledge of Operation Condor could not have been told.

Another key document in the story of Kissinger and the Letelier-Moffitt assassination is Kissinger's cable on September 16th stating that no action should be taken in respect to the démarche.⁴¹ However, this document was not released until 2010, hiding Kissinger's connection to the lack of action until thirty-four years after the assassination. This document in particular proves interesting given that William Rogers, who Kissinger describes as "my colleague, my friend and, in many ways, my conscience,"⁴² had attempted to argue prior to its release that Kissinger was not involved in the failure to deliver the démarche. He states, "so far as the record shows, he never saw it", with "it" being the cable from Shlaudeman calling for no further action a few days after receiving instruction from Kissinger to do so.⁴³ While the record at the time did not show Kissinger's involvement, the lack of evidence was not because it did not exist, as Rogers would suggest, but rather due to these documents remaining intentionally hidden. In both cases, key pieces of information necessary to understand the history of the Letelier-Moffitt assassination were almost lost, and almost allowed the United States to tell a very different story of their actions during the time.

The knowledge that there are still many secret documents also allows for stories to be told with no way for historians to verify them. For example, Rogers claims that Kissinger's call for "no further action" was actually in response to messages stating that action had already been taken. However, when pressed for evidence, he stated that these documents were "'nowhere to be found.'"⁴⁴ If key figures from the time of Letelier-Moffitt assassination can claim that documents exist to exonerate them without producing such documents, any history could be constructed.

The currently declassified documents also allow Kissinger leeway to claim that his failure to act in response prior to the Letelier assassination was accidental rather than intentional. For instance, all documents released leading up to the Letelier assassination make no reference to the idea that Operation Condor could attempt an assassination on U.S. soil. Was this possibility simply not considered, as the primary sources currently suggest, or are there documents that have not

40 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 354.

41 "Actions Taken," September 16, 1976.

42 Kissinger, "William D. Rogers."

43 Rogers and Maxwell, "Mythmaking and Foreign Policy [with Reply]."

44 Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, 533.

been released? While enormous progress has been made in piecing together the story of Letelier's assassination from declassified documents, it can still be questioned what remains to be discovered and what elements of the story are not yet known. As Douglas Valentine, a researcher who has studied the CIA for 20 years comments "the CIA trusts that academics will abide by the rules (and most do) ... so major portions of our history have fallen into the black hole of official secrecy."⁴⁵ Classified documents, unrecorded conversations, and fabricated stories all obscure the truth of Kissinger's actions leading up to the Letelier-Moffit assassination.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to piece together the scraps emerging from the black hole of classified documents and hidden histories. The existing record shows that Henry Kissinger did indeed fail to act to prevent the assassination of Orlando Letelier. While his motivations for doing so are uncertain, I suggest a variety of possible motivations as evidenced in released documents, including an ego that did not believe assassinations would take place on U.S. soil, a desire not to harm relationships with Pinochet, recognition of the possible benefits to the U.S., and perhaps, simple human error. However, the narrative told by the existing documents is formed in the setting of secrecy and missing information that continues to surround this assassination.

Chile's National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation released a detailed report on March 4th, 1999 that exposed the repressive policies and crimes of the Chilean dictatorship.⁴⁶ This process has enabled healing and progress in the wake of the violence of the late 20th Century. While the United States has begun declassifying documents, Kenneth Maxwell describes these documents as having been "extracted painfully, like rotten teeth."⁴⁷ There is potentially still much to learn in understanding Kissinger's role in the events of September 21st. Until the full historical record is revealed and efforts are made to unshroud the mystery of this story, there will be barriers to believing the words of the government, barriers to collective healing, and there will be barriers to knowing history itself.

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